

Poor, but powerful Powerful, and
conscious of power

"As life unfolded itself, I became aware that I belonged to a class of persons who habitually gave orders, but \ who seldom, if ever, executed the orders of other people. My mother sat in her boudoir and gave orders—orders that brooked neither delay nor evasion.* My father, by temperament the least autocratic and most accommodating of men, spent his whole life in giving orders. When, one after another, my sisters' husbands joined the family group, they also were giving orders."

This sense of natural and instinctive power was the most important distinguishing colour in the picture of the world which unfolded itself to the eyes of the girl as she grew up. From intimate inside knowledge comes the conviction, to sound so often in her mature writing, that insolence is the hateful fault from which the "upper classes" suffer. That intimate knowledge she has, with a truly magnificent candour, given to the world in the first volume of autobiography which she calls *My Apprenticeship*, published in 1926 a book as fascinating in its delineation of a social period as in its portrayal of a mind. From it, we may know her inner history as never that of her husband, know it so well that any description of her life before she met him must consist mainly of quotations from one of the great books of our time.

Although she was brought up mainly in the south-west, her parents, on both sides, were children of the north of England that new north which came into power with the Industrial Revolution and the 1832 Reform Act. Her

paternal grandfather, Richard Potter senior, is one of the Potters of Tadcaster Lawrence Hey worth, her maternal grandfather, after whom his only daughter was named Lawrence, came from Rossendale in Lancashire Both were Radicals, Nonconformists, and supporters of John Bright, both became members of the post-1832 House of Commons, Richard Potter being returned by Wigan in 1832, Lawrence